2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

SECTION VII

MAGIC, MEDICINE, SOOTHSAYING

1. Magicians, Witches, and Vampires

In Albania many believe in witchcraft. It plays a great part in the life of the people, who live in a constant state of protecting themselves from evil influences and inviting good ones. Both men and women practise magic. A witch is called "Shtriga." Illnesses and pains not caused by a wound are commonly believed to be the result of evil spells. 754

Shtrigas not only cause illness by spells; they suck people's blood and drain their lives slowly. Anæmia, tuberculosis, and all wasting diseases are ascribed to this. To be able to do it the shtriga takes the form of a moth or fly, and crawls into the house at night by the keyhole or a cranny. [753]

Thus it is clear that these simple folk long ago realized that insects that fly by night cause fatal diseases, though it is but very recently that the species has been discovered by scientists. The Balkan tribesman did not think an insect unaided could work such harm and ascribed it to wicked human influence.

The shtriga can reduce herself or another person to insect size by smearing the body with an ointment which is a profound secret. Every inch of the body must be smeared or the part left will remain full-sized. In Scutari a young married woman, being pregnant, craved greatly for wine, but was too poor to buy any. Her mother-in-law, a shtriga, stripped her and smeared her so that she became small enough to pass through the keyhole of a certain cellar famed for good wine. "But do not mention the name of God till you are safely back," said the shtriga. Off flew the woman at night, entered the cellar, and drank freely, and felt so cheered and grateful that she cried: "Thank God!" At once she found herself standing naked in her usual form. "A shocking thing to happen to a respectable married woman," said my informant, who knew the parties and firmly believed the "facts." There she had to wait till next day, when the owner came to draw wine. He, good man, was astonished; but on hearing how it came about, kindly lent her clothes to go home in. "The cellar and keyhole are still there," I was told, "and prove the truth of this beyond doubt."

A shtriga, when glutted with blood, will go out in the dark and vomit it. If you can follow her undetected you must scrape up some

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working harm to the world in general. It is interesting to find in Herrick's *Hesperides* a charm for stables:—

> Hang up hooks and shears to scare
> Hence the hag that rides the mare.

The scissors, too, are among the amulets worn on a silver chain by the women around Nish in Serbia.

Tony was proof against the Evil Eye, for he wore a powerful amulet. A similar one is used in other Balkan lands and in Hungary. A snake is caught by pinning down its head with a forked stick. The head is then cut off with silver—the sharpened edge of a large coin will do. It is then dried and enclosed between two silver St. Georges, and finally blessed by the priest. This protects against all spells. It is evidently a piece of sympathetic magic. Evil is to die as did the dragon—represented by the snake's head—slain by St. George.

Tony's wife was once bewitched and had sharp pains all over, but could not be sure who caused this. The same evil person attempted to bewitch Tony, but, protected by the snake's head, he only felt a few twinges. His wife, who suffered much, was cured by a dervish, who took some hair from the top of her head and from her armpits, tied it up, and burnt it while muttering some unknown charm. The pain went as the hair burnt and never came back. This and the case of the child both occurred at Djakova, at that time a wholly Albanian town.

Marko, too, was cured of similar pains. A Moslem gathered some herbs, but kept their species a secret. He fumigated them over a brazier, muttering a charm. He then tied them up, and Marko had to stand upright with his arms fully extended on either side. The Moslem put the bunch of herbs on Marko's head, drew them down the side of the face, along the arm, back to the body, and down the side of the body to the foot. He then repeated the operation on the other side, and cried: "Pain, pain, fly away from this man to the top of the highest mountain, where there is neither man, woman, nor child, bird nor beast, and stay there!" He burnt the herbs. The pain flew away and apparently remained on the mountain-top, for it never returned.

When I was in the Scutari hospital, very ill with acute sciatica, poor old Marko sought in vain for the right herbs and was grieved at his failure.

Shtrigas were said to be very numerous all through North Albania. At Zumi, near Djakova, I was told that perhaps one-third of the women were blood-suckers; and in Nikaj was assured by the Franciscan in charge that most of the women were shtrigas, and he strove continually against the vile deeds, in which they were assisted by the Devil.

That the whole cult is the remains of ancient, long pre-Christian

776 beliefs and rites one can hardly doubt. As is well known, the gods of the heathens became the devils of the Christians.

776 Marko was greatly afraid of Beelzebub and mentioned him with
777 a curse and a whisper. Belial and Beelzebub were supposed to be the most active. The tribesman followed the advice of his priest and put
[304] a cross on his house and tattooed himself with a cross, but he further protected himself with more ancient signs; he planted the skulls of horses, goats, and oxen on poles round his house and fields. Some houses had rows of skulls. I wondered whether, in old days, human ones had figured there, too.

The horse-skull was most valued not only in Albania, but also in Bosnia and in Montenegro. Where civilization has penetrated the horse-skull was often replaced by a twisted petroleum tin whitewashed. Short-sighted devils, seeing it from a distance, could easily have mistaken it for the real thing and fought shy.

[793] Priests are but human. I found one Catholic priest had a whole array of horse- and other skulls round his beehives. He laughed it off when I remarked on it, and added that bees were very liable to disease. He evidently wanted to be on the safe side.

754 I often found in the mountains a distinct fear of being drawn, or "written," as they always called it. At Vraka I asked if I might draw the interior of a house. The woman was doubtful. She at last said I was not to "write" her or her children, and, to make sure, she drove the children out of the house. In Luria I was told not to "write" anyone or any house. At Lohja was a wonderful old man, who was reputed to be 110, who boasted that he had sinned but twice in his life—and then it was not his fault. Men in plenty he had killed, but never dishonourably or for money. The company suggested that I should "write" him. Much flattered, the old man sat still for a while, but when everyone shouted that the sketch was exactly like him, he became greatly alarmed, and earnestly begged me never to destroy what I had "written" about him, for at the moment it was torn he would drop down dead. I preserved the sketch, and five years later found him still going strong.

754 At Seltzi, in the Klimenti tribe, I was told the best way to detect
787 a shtriga is to keep the bones of the pig you ate on the last day of Carnival. All through the Balkans the pig, abhorred by Turk and Jew, is a sign of Christianity. On Easter Day you make a cross with the pig's bones and tie it on the church door when the church is full of people. If any shtrigas are in the church they cannot get out except carried on the shoulders of the man who made the cross. They run
754 wildly round and round and can be caught.

681 There was, so far as I could learn, no traditional punishment for a

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witch in Albania; and though there can be no doubt that one has now and then been done away with, the general idea was that it was best not to interfere lest worse should follow.

Marko strongly believed this. A woman a few doors away from us was a shtriga, and he ascribed much ill-luck to her. He avoided her as much as possible, and did not speak with her. When the autumn began to turn cold, numbers of mice that had summered in the cornfields came into the house. My room swarmed, and they ran over me at night. I told Marko to buy a trap. He seldom forgot things, and when I asked for the trap in the evening, I was surprised that he had not bought one. Again next day I asked him not to forget the mouse-trap; and again there was no trap. Then Teresi, his wife, came to me and said: "Please do not ask Marko to buy a trap; he does not want to." "But why?" She hesitated. "Marko thinks the mice are sent." "Sent?" I asked. "But who can send them?" "Marko thinks that woman—the shtriga—has sent them." I was delighted and asked: "How do people send mice?" "Marko says that with Beelzebub all things are possible." "But why should we not kill the mice?" "Because she would be angry and send something worse. Perhaps rats! Who knows?"

It was clearly impossible to trap the mice. I considered the situation, and next day asked if we might have a cat. Marko thought deeply. He then said it was natural for a cat to kill mice; we, in fact, should be powerless to prevent it, and should not be responsible. The cat was obtained—a splendid mouser; and so we defeated the shtriga. It is clearly better not to incense them.

Men also are magicians, but I think not so often. A magician appeared at Nikaj when I was there. He was believed by the priest, whose guest I was, and by Marko to be so diabolical that the former ordered him to leave the parish, and neither of them would let me go out without a strong bodyguard; so I never got near him. He was famed for being able to raise many devils by dancing and wagging one leg behind him, and was believed to have come to Nikaj because most of the women were shtrigas.

A magician in Albanian is "maghistar" or "menghistar." Magic is "maghi" or "menghi"; "menghi" is also a remedy. In early days medicine and magic were one and the same. The words appear to be derived from, or connected with, "magus." The wise man of old used spells just as did the "wise woman" of the English village.

A strange tale which all believed was told of such a man who had worked much harm with magic in the Djakova district. One of the local beys, therefore, arrested him and locked him up. When he had been some time imprisoned the bey was one day entertaining guests on a feast day. The party was dull, and someone asked where that magician

754 was who used to do wonders. The bey thought it a good idea, and the man was fetched from his cell. He was very willing to perform, and asked only for a bowl of water. One was brought, and he made an [787] incantation over it. He then said that if any guest would name a place he wished to see, it could be seen in the water. Someone asked for Malta, and Malta was duly reflected; the harbour, the quay, and a steamer just getting up steam. When it had been admired, the magician asked the bey: "Have I your permission, noble Bey, to go off in that steamer?"

"Certainly," said the bey.

The magician lifted his foot and put it on the steamer in the water-bowl, and immediately went off in that steamer and was never heard of again. No one but myself could see anything improbable in this amazing tale; with Beelzebub all things are possible.

2. The Evil Eye

754 761 The Evil Eye was rampant. At Vukli an unhappy woman told me it had killed all her eight children. A man there, to prove the power of his eye, had stared at a bunch of grapes, which had withered under his gaze and fallen to the ground before the awe-struck spectators. I did not meet this man.

754 Marko had a milch ewe he greatly valued. One day a mountain woman came to the door begging. He gave her bread, but she was not satisfied, and as she left she looked at the poor beast, which was perfectly well, and said: "What a fine ewe!" Soon afterwards it began to sicken. Marko sent for the vet., who said at once: "I can do nothing—someone has looked at this ewe. You must find her and make her remove the spell." She could not be found and the ewe died, Marko cut her up for mutton. I expressed horror. "The meat," said he, "is beautiful. There was nothing the matter with the ewe except a lot of yellow spots in its liver, made by that woman."

754 777 *Protection against Evil Eye.*—Many amulets are worn. Most horses and many cattle wear blue beads (sham turquoise), tufts of badger-hair, which is said to be very efficacious, or triangular leather cases containing inscriptions. A universal protection, as in many other parts of the world, is a horn or horns. Though the horse-skull is now popular to guard fields and houses, the original skull was probably a horned one, e.g. the familiar ox-skull carved on the frieze of many a classical and pseudo-classical building. A pair of boar's tusks, mounted as a crescent and hung round the neck, is a favourite amulet for a handsome [776] saddle-horse. It prevents evil spirits riding the horse at night and

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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CHAPTER IX.

ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR FAMILY CEREMONIES.

562 184 THE domestic usages of the Albanians vary slightly, according to locality and religion, but are, in their main features, identical. And though the customs surrounding such family ceremonies as births, marriages, and deaths belong naturally more to the domain of women than of men, the latter are not less scrupulous in the fulfilment of the part in these observances which fall to their share.

156 181 Tribal and family pride being, as has been already seen, the leading feature of Albanian character, the desire of offspring, and especially male offspring, is naturally very strong with them. A childless man [554] is designated by an expression which signifies "without a root," and is looked upon as a most unfortunate [754] being. The wish, "May you be childless!" is also considered the most weighty curse that can be launched against a man by his enemy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dearest wish of every woman's heart is consequently to be the mother of a numerous family of boys, both for the sake of the future prosperity of the tribe and for the present social consideration which their birth ensures to her.

843 When the fact that an Albanian woman is about to

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

respected woman dies, the friends who come to offer their condolences say to her relatives, "She was the Vittóre of the house."

In Elbassan the Vittóre also conveys the idea of a good genius, though the snake element is absent, and a wife who has presented her husband with a large family of sons is designated by this name.

Vampire beliefs are, generally speaking, more or less the same in Albania as in the rest of Turkey. The hair and beard of the "Restless One" are believed to grow in the tomb, and any one bending over the grave may hear him rattle and grind his teeth. Some men are also held to possess the propensities of vampires before death, and to be in the habit of unconsciously going forth by night to suck the blood of children and young maidens.

Strangely enough, in Elbassan and the neighbourhood, Von Hahn found no traces of the Vampire (βρυκολακ) pure and simple, as he elsewhere exists. Two connected species, however, came under his notice, the Lougát (λουγάτ) and the Karkantsoli (καρκαντσολι). The first was described as the corpse of a Turk with finger- and toe-nails of prodigious length, which, wrapped in its winding-sheet, roams about at night devouring everything it finds, and strangling any human being unfortunate enough to cross its path. The name of Lougát is also given generally in Northern Albania to a class of uncanny apparitions, which are believed to be the bewitched forms of persons who have led evil lives. These have the faculty of changing their forms with surprising and confusing rapidity, appearing successively as

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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in which he remains seated three days, at the end of which time he is washed with "unspoken-over" water.[1] This, which is also called by an Albanian word signifying "stolen," is water drawn from the well or fountain in silence and carried home without the bearer having spoken, or been spoken to, on the way, and it is believed to possess highly salutary virtues. Into the water some "sweet" or "heavy" leaves are thrown, the number and also the kind being determined by fixed rules according to the nature of the malady. Among the "sweet" leaves are those of the pomegranate, apple, and rose trees, and also, strange to say, of nettles; among the "heavy," those of the laurel, cypress, ivy, and other evergreens. Three days after such an ablution the patient is expected either to recover or to die. Should he be able to indicate the spot on which he received the blow, the earth is there sprinkled with rose-water in order to appease the offended beings, who are said to be extremely fond of this scent; or he there throws down something, the nature of which is known only to himself, in the belief that the malady from which he suffers will be transferred to the being who may chance to tread upon it.

The effects of the evil eye are also removed by sprinkling the patient with "unspoken-over" water, three nettle stalks being dipped into it for that purpose, and giving him to eat three mulberry buds, the mulberry tree being one of the sovereign antidotes for that much dreaded influence.

Rheumatism in the hands or feet is cured by

[1] Such water is also used by the Greeks, who call it νερὸ ἀχράτευ.

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

of these parti-coloured bracelets, with a tiny gold coin attached, was, on the 1st of March (Old Style), presented by the Roumanian Consul-General to each lady of his acquaintance, and I, for one, religiously wore my charm against the power of the March sun, which in the East generally is said to "blacken" the complexion, until the month was out. It was not, however, finally thrown to the swallows, but carried off by an English visitor as a curio.

On the 25th of this month the women go through the house beating on copper pans, in order to drive out any poisonous snakes that may have intended to take up their abode there. The two last days of March and the first of April are called *Plyáketé*, a word signifying "old," and referring to the past season, personified as "Old Mother Winter." If by the last-mentioned date Spring has not yet fully set in, the blame is laid at the door of the old women, who are evidently held to be in league with "Old Mother Winter."

On Easter Eve in some places, Selitza, for instance, the young men assemble with lighted torches, which they wave about as they walk in procession through the village. Arrived at the river, they throw them in, crying, "*Koré-ya* (O Maiden)! We throw thee into the water with these torches, so mayest thou never return!" the *Koré* evidently referring, as Von Hahn suggests,[1] to the malevolent supernals, Vilas, Dragouas, &c., before described. When the priest comes to bless the house on Easter Day, the women throw after him, as he leaves, hot embers from the

[1] *Albanesische Studien*, p. 160.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

562 woman was sometimes shot accidentally in a man's stead in spite of
*628 the tabu. In that unhappy event in Kurbin a woman in the
672 murderer's family might be killed in return. If, too, a feud was
784 unusually bitter, as was, for instance, the Kaloshi family one in Dibër, all barriers of law and disgrace were thrown down; 'kill at all costs' was the order of the day, and in its execution women and children were as likely as men to suffer.

This tabu on killing women had several sources. In the first place, a woman was 'a sack for carrying' things, i.e. she was the vehicle by which a family was carried on, and killing her might mean the loss of more than one man to her husband's family. Then she carried no arms, and therefore was classed with old men, children, and lunatics as safe from an avenger. Again, she was
[421] always regarded as an article of property, belonging in her maiden days to her father and afterwards to her husband; her father had the right to her work till she married, and her husband afterwards; in token of this work her father sold her dear, and her husband bought her dear. Articles of property could not be damaged in the course of blood feuds. There was also the feeling that it was a disgrace for a 'strong' man to kill anything so inferior as a woman.

The tabu on killing women was so strong that when one committed a murder, not she but one of the males in the family expiated the crime, if expiation were possible. Murders by women fell into two categories, the first outside and the second inside the family. In both cases the murderess might commit the crime on her own account or butt into a men's quarrel to avenge a murdered relative.

* 628 One more class of expiator remains to be considered. It some-
672 times happened that a man hired an outsider to kill his enemy. In
● [754] the Breg i Matit some held that such a man was a 'witch', and
676 since witches could not have blood feuds, he must go scot-free and his hireling suffer, like any other murderer. In most places, if the instigator could not be discovered, or if time was passing without vengeance being taken on him, the hireling was killed. These practices were exceptional, and in general the feud was credited to the principal rather than to the subordinate who fired the fatal shot.

[554] Vanity as well as justice came into the question, for the instigator was usually a more important person than his instrument, and killing him brought the avenger more glory.

A 754 of the blood on a silver coin, wrap it up, and wear it as an amulet. It will protect you from all blood-sucking shtrigas.

A [163 761] Shtrigas especially like the blood of children. Child mortality in all Balkan lands is exceedingly high. It is not unusual to find women who have borne from eight to twelve children, of whom none, or but one or two, survive. Nor could I ever make them believe that it was the way in which the babes were kept that was the real cause. So A [751] terrified are the mothers that the Evil Eye may fall on the child that they guard it by keeping its heavy wooden cradle wrapped in a thick woollen coverlet. No Evil Eye, and no ray of light or breath of fresh A [853 777] air, can penetrate. When suckling, the mother takes the cradle on her knees or kneels over it, and raises just enough of the rug to enable her to give the breast; both cradle and child are hung with amulets. The M 754 same method, too, is popular in Montenegro and Bosnia. I have seen luckless infants as white as bleached celery, slowly pining away; but 853 the poor mother believed the pining due to a shtriga, who had put a curse on her breast and poisoned her milk, or had looked at the A 755 child with an Evil Eye. Only the very strong survive. Marko used to prescribe washing the child with a decoction of walnut leaves. Neither he nor anyone else would believe me when I begged for fresh air and sunlight.

A 754 755 Only she who has caused the evil can undo it. My old friend, Tony Precha, who was a mine of old-world lore, told me how a shtriga was forced to do this: "The child of our neighbour was slowly pining away. It was the work of a shtriga. One day it died. I saw it cold and dead. The father, in a fury, shouted that he knew who had killed it. He A [681] rushed out and caught a woman and dragged her in. She screamed and denied that she had done it. He dragged her to the dead child, crying, 'Spit in its mouth!' She refused, and struggled and screamed. If she did not spit before the sun went down it would be too late. She knew this, and that was why she would not spit, for it was already late. Then the father, in despair, put his pistol to her head and shouted, 'Spit or I fire!' She spat. The father threw her out of the door. Then we watched the child. Very slowly it began to revive, and in three hours it was quite well. The father had saved it by acting at once." And Tony saw this with his own eyes.

How apt are most of us to believe that *post hoc* is *propter hoc*.

A 754 776 777 In Albania evil spirits are most active in the spring. Garlic is tied round children's necks on or about Shrove Tuesday as a special precaution. In Shala, and, I believe, other tribes, the women tie a black cord with three knots in it to the doorposts along with a pair of scissors, the wool-carding comb, and some berries (species unknown). This is not merely to protect the house, but to prevent shtrigas and bad spirits

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
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prevents stumbling. A man I knew galloped for his life across the long, narrow, and slippery bridge at Djakova while some six others were firing at him. Usually one would have led the horse across. But horse and rider escaped unscathed. The former wore a fine pair of boar's tusks and the latter a piece of a meteorite, a good protection against bullets. One Albanian I knew wore a piece of meteorite continually in London and was never once shot at.

A small brass imitation of the boar's tusk amulet formed part of the headstall of the Turkish gendarmerie horse-trappings. I possess a charming little crescent formed of a pair of falcon's talons which I bought of a Maltsori woman who said it was a great "ilatch" (remedy).

As a single horn, a wolf's fang, a cock's spur, a crab's claw are all good. Of a Vlah at Prishtina I bought a dried mole's paw set in silver, especially recommended to keep a child in health. It is a miniature "Fatima Hand."

Another highly valued object in Albania was a "stone snail" (ammonite). Baron Nopcsa, when geologizing, tried to remove a big ammonite, conspicuous on a wayside rock in the mountains. The quarrying of it out was too difficult and he left it; but the stone snail was chipped in the attempt. Marko, who had great faith in stone snails, lamented this much. It was discussed in the mountains and folk agreed it was lucky it was no worse. God alone knew what might have happened had the stone snail been removed.

The cowrie is a potent defence, but is rare in North Albania, so not more than one or two per person are worn, usually round the neck or sewn to the cap—except by the women of Vraka, who always wear two, one on each side of the face, sewn to the hair-plait. The cowrie is worn by women and children, but not, so far as I have seen, by men.

Though the natural cowrie is scarce, cowrie-land being afar, a large number, if not all, of the silver circular pendants, common all through the west side of the Balkan peninsula, are clearly derived from the cowrie, as Fig. 19 shows. In the older examples the cowrie type is evident. Two wriggly lines imitate the lip of the shell and a round hole the end aperture. In modern specimens sometimes this hole is all that is left; the cowrie is forgotten. In some the shape of the cowrie is preserved, and filigree replaces the wriggly line of the shell lip. In others the circle evolves into a crescent, as the plate shows. It seems possible that the pear-shaped pendant, so common on Near-Eastern, African, and Asiatic ornaments, is, in fact, derived from the cowrie (e.g. Fig. 19, No. 4*a*).

The cock is very powerful against evil spirits, who "vanish at the crowing." A cock appears on each side of the ornamental head-band worn until recently by the Herzegovinian women round their caps.

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777 754 and catch it there, thus literally "saving your face," as did the women of Konjitza in Bosnia.

A 753 754 777 Illness being very largely ascribed to Evil Eye or magic, amulets in Albania are usually called "derman" or "ilatch," both of which words also mean remedy.

A 755 *Sympathetic Magic.*—In this the disease is supposed to act in accord with some object or other and disappears as it does.

A cure for jaundice was thus performed by a Moslem wise man on the child of a Scutari Christian. He tied some red wool round the child and some yellow wool round a red rose in the garden. He ordered the red to go out of the rose into the child, and the yellow to go out of the child into the rose. In a few days the rose wilted and yellowed and the child recovered its rosy cheeks. The efficacy of the cure was undoubted.

Marko had another he thought better, because it could be carried out at any time of year. You put a small fish in a bucket of water. The patient had to stare at it as it swam round and round. If he stared at it long and steadily enough, the disease went out of the patient into the fish, which died.

A [722 164] In 1912–13, owing to the Albanian Revolution and the Balkan wars, large numbers of the mountain tribesmen who pasture their beasts on the Bojana plains in winter were unable to return to the mountains, and were blocked in the malaria swamps all the summer, with terrible consequences. Almost all were struck down with a virulent form of the disease. I went through the worst districts with a load of quinine, and found the people trying to cure their greatly enlarged spleens by slowly roasting the spleen of a sheep at a fire, and muttering spells which ordered their own spleens to diminish as that of the sheep shrivelled at the fire.

A 164 776 753 Epilepsy was not uncommon in the mountains. It was looked upon as a possession by evil spirits. I once saw a woman fall down suddenly in a fit. Some men at once rushed up and, telling me to get out of the way, fired their revolvers alongside of her head. This was to scare away the evil spirit. As she soon recovered, they believed they had done so. I once saved a woman under similar circumstances from being flogged. Luckily she recovered quickly. But it is not so very long ago that lunatics were flogged in England.

A [755] A 777 755 Marko knew of a certain cure for epilepsy, but difficult to obtain. If you see a snake swallowing a frog, you must throw a black handkerchief over it. This scares the snake and it disgorges the frog. Keep the handkerchief, and when someone falls in a fit, throw it over him. He will then disgorge the disease as the snake did the frog. We kept a careful look-out, on our travels, for a snake eating a frog, but we never found one.

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
Montenegrins EF5
Balkan Peoples E13
Serbs EF6

Gospels. In Serbian these are called "Zapis." They are enclosed in silver cases called by the Turkish word "hamaljija" both by Serbs and Albanians; or they are sewn up in leather. Such leather cases are usually triangular. Most of the Catholic women of Zadrima, Albania, wore two brass crucifixes on a chain and a leathern triangular amulet case. Such cases are often fixed to the horns of oxen. When a Christian finds a Christian "writing" has done no good, he will go on the sly to beg one from a Moslem, and vice versa.

Priests, both Orthodox and Catholic, write an immense number of amulets, fold the paper neatly in a triangle, thread it on a string, and direct that it shall be tied over the spot where the pain is felt; and peasants will tramp many miles in search of this help. At Ochrida, where I had to examine the patients before the doctor saw them, I came across an up-to-date development of this treatment. A child was brought with his neck thickly swathed. When the wrappings were off, his neck was an alarming dull purple, as though horribly contused. The amulet had been written in copying ink and had come off on his skin! The mother fondly hoped its magic had soaked in.

In both Albania and Montenegro I have seen Moslems flock to a church or a well-known Christian shrine in search of a cure. At the Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, on the festival day at Plevlje, I saw two Turkish gendarmes bring in a lunatic with his arms tied behind him and lay him in front of the altar during service in order that he might be cured.

Several thousand peasants, Orthodox, Catholic, and Moslem, used to crowd on Trinity Sunday to the shrine of St. Vasil of Ostrog in Montenegro—a purely Montenegrin saint. The shrine of another local saint at the Piperski monastery is also in great repute. The best way to obtain a cure is to pass the night lying on the ground, with the head beneath the coffin, holding the relics. For this privilege a high fee was asked. At Ostrog I was told that a Moslem stricken with paralysis had been brought from Mostar on a mule, and had paid twenty-five napoleons to pass the night thus. Next day he was well and returned home happy. But he was an unbelieving Moslem, and soon declared he did not believe the saint had cured him: he had got well of himself. Next morning he awoke again paralysed, and the twenty-five napoleons were under his pillow. The saint withdrew the cure and returned the fee.

An amulet with a good writing on it works good; but evil writing can in the same way work evil.

While I was in Scutari a Turkish officer fell in love with a Catholic girl. He acted honourably and asked her hand of her parents. To their horror the girl not only wished to marry him, but she went to the

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Contemporary Macedonians EF8
Montenegrins EF5

757 enough creature near Scutari, was esteemed as very good for con-
278 sumptive patients.

A The flesh of the common land tortoise was thought of great value
[262] for all convalescents. When I came out of hospital Marko had prepared a savoury stew for my supper. I ate heartily. "Thank God!" cried the good old man, "you have eaten 'breshké,' and you will soon be strong
A and well." He fetched the shell of the large tortoise which had provided
[136] my meal.

A So common are these tortoises that an Albanian proverb says:
164 "There is no mountain without a wolf and no plain without a tortoise."
136 *Diseases.*—Intestinal troubles of all kinds are rife in the Balkans, owing to bad food, and in some districts to a morbid appetite for very acid food. Intestinal worms—tape, thread, and round—are very common.
A A preparation of buckthorn is given.

165 Infant mortality is excessively high all through the Balkans. If
853 a mother can nurse her child till the flocks are giving milk plentifully it stands a chance; if not, it is fed on parboiled maize-flour and heavy maize-bread. The abdomen swells greatly, and the child often dies;
A and, as I have stated, desire to preserve the child from the Evil Eye
854 causes many to be half-suffocated in the cradle. Only the toughest
754 survive, and they are very tough. The Albanians, Montenegrins, and
M Macedonians, whom I have had charge of as sick or wounded, do not
CM suffer from shock, nor are they as sensitive to pain as West Europeans.
A
151 *Wounds.*—The Albanian tribesmen were far cleverer with wounds
A than with sickness. They had a traditional antiseptic treatment which was very successful. Old Marash Hutzi of Hoti, who had learnt the
757 art from his grandfather, explained it to me. A wound must never
752 be touched with water; it must be thoroughly washed out with rakia (brandy distilled from grapes). He judged the state of a wound by smelling it carefully. When well washed—when it perforated a limb he poured rakia right through—he dressed it with an ointment he made from white wax, olive oil, pine resin, and a decoction of the bark of green elder twigs. If deep, he plugged it with wool soaked in this ointment. In hot weather the dressings should be changed twice a day; and so long as the wound was foul he washed it daily with rakia. He saved a leg—compound comminuted fracture caused by horse-kick—which the Turkish military surgeon was going to amputate and made a quite usable, though rather shortened, limb of it. The grateful patient gave him thirty francs, the biggest fee the good old
A man had ever received. He had made his own instruments—some
757 probes, forceps, a small saw made from a barrel hoop, and some knives.
826 From his grandfather's and his own experience he had a fair knowledge
752 of where the main arteries ran, "where it was safe to cut and where

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Montenegrins EF5

Monastery, I saw three. They stood with their hands on their knees and their heads thrust under the desk from which the pope was to read the Lessons. The desk being draped, their heads were hidden and their hind-quarters protruded grotesquely. If they could refrain from crowing during the reading of the Lessons they would be cured. The cure failed. Hardly had the pope begun to read when a hideous and unearthly din arose beneath his desk. No one intervened; no one even smiled. The pope read steadily, though his voice was drowned by the noise. At the end the three were led away—uncured. But I was told that as a rule the cure is successful. It may well be, for the Balkan peasant is very much affected by suggestion. He pines if he believes he has been cursed; he dies if he believes his death is "egil" (written in the Book of Fate). I did not see or hear of a case of crowing hysteria in Albania.

In Montenegro I was told a remedy for fever. It was to make fire with a fire-drill of wood. The patient helped to work the drill. The fire went out of him and into the wood and he was cured. Perhaps the exertion of drilling produced sweat and so relieved the patient. Krsto believed greatly in this cure.

6. Soothsaying

For some inscrutable reason man in many lands has thought his gods were likely to choose the insides of animals as a means for revealing the future.

"Plucking the entrails of an offering forth, they could not find a heart within the beast." So the augurs warned Cæsar to beware the ides of March. Balkan folk still find their fate written in the bones of certain animals.

I first saw the bones read at Selchan, a village in the Spata mountains, near Elbasan. It was in those days a very remote spot, and a Russian Consul was the only foreigner who had visited it within memory. Most of the male population were "wanted" by the Turkish Government. But for the purpose of my visit the friendly Albanian Mutasarif of Elbasan arranged a truce. We were halted outside the village for a parley, and also to give time to all the men of military age (whom the Government was trying to conscript for the Army) to hide in the bushes. I was then received with great joy, and even greater hospitality. The ancient headman, Constantine Suliman, a fine figure in a white fustanella, swore friendship, and hustled the women to spread a noble banquet of roast lamb, stewed fowl, cheese, milk, and maize-bread.

The district had neither church nor mosque. Every inhabitant had

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Teresi, had dreamed that I should receive bad news from home that day. I laughed and reminded him there was no post till Tuesday. At that moment there was a knock at the gate. The kavass from the British Consulate brought me a note to tell me of the death of King Edward VII. After this it was vain for me to say that dreams foretold nothing. Teresi had dreamed the death of King Edward and the matter was beyond dispute.

The man who looked after my horse dreamed he had seen my sister in the bazaar buying butter and was greatly mystified. No one could explain it, but all were relieved when I had a letter from her saying she was quite well.

An Englishman who travelled in the mountains and was popular was dreamed of. He was seen fording with difficulty a river and hurting his hand as he climbed out. It was decided that he would get safely through a great danger.

It was considered extremely lucky to dream of climbing up a mountain—perhaps because the tribesman places Heaven on a mountain-top. It is lucky to dream of fishing.

7. The Curse

A curse is dreaded still in Balkan lands; it is closely related to a spell. But a spell is accompanied by pagan rites; a curse is without rites—it acts by suggestion. Someone believed to be powerful cries: "May you wither and die!" and you proceed to do so. A curse can be retrospective, and is then considered peculiarly horrible. One of the worst is for a mother to say to her son: "May my milk poison you!' Though he be a grown man she may thus harm him.

A good example is found in the Serb ballad of the *Murderess Mother* (Karadjitch Collection). The mother was wroth with her son, Jovan: "O Jovan, 'tis five years since thy mother gave thee a wife, yet neither boy nor maiden has been born to thee. Someone hath cast a spell on thee; or evil people have wrought wickedness; or has someone cursed you on your marriage? or dost thou not like the maiden? or she like not thee? Something there must be. Kill thy wife, O my son, and I will give thee a better of better stock, who will bear thee offspring!" Jovan refuses with horror, and his mother unbuttoned the coat on her bosom, and tore open her shirt and drew forth both her breasts, crying: "O Jovan, disobedient son! If thou obeyest not thine old mother, may thy mother's milk be leprous to thee, which thou hast sucked from these breasts! Kill thy wife and I will give thee a better." And young Jovan was greatly afeared of his mother's terrible curse,

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and he thought: "Better that I lose my soul and then repent of my sin than that I should ruin my mother's desire (for offspring), and hearken not to my mother's curse." He then orders his young brother Bogdan to do the deed and bring back a bloody knife as token. Bogdan refuses, and Jovan wishes to kill him, too. Bogdan weeps and prays his mother to remove the curse. But she will not, and Bogdan consents and leads away his sister-in-law. She implores to be allowed to pass three days in church, and he grants her prayer. There a miracle is vouchsafed her and she bears a beautiful boy. Jovan and Bogdan rejoice. But the mother, even then, will not pardon their disobedience. Filled with wrath, she stabs herself, and, very properly, "the demons seized her soul."

Here is a picture of the ancient power of life and death that parents had over children as well as of the power and terror of a curse. We see, too, the dawning influence of the Church upon the minds of a savage people. The tale probably dates from the days when Christianity was beginning to break down the pagan customs of the peasantry.

S 754

Strange is it to find the retrospective curse in the official report of the trial at Salonika of the Serbian "Black Hand" officers in 1917. Naum Dimitrijevitch, a journalist, giving evidence about the lawless state of the Serbian Army on July 25, 1914, states: "Major Dobrosav Gjorgevitch came up quickly, cursing as he came my *father and mother*. He reached me and overwhelmed me with his horrible curses against the *father and mother* of the Prime Minister, Nikola Pashitch, and Stojan Protitch, Minister, and all the Radical members. . . . He shouted: 'Now you shall meet your God. You shall never get away from here.' Then he cursed the *father and mother* of Colonel Okanovitch, etc."

A M 754 161

Thus even among the *intelligentsia* the use of the retrospective curse persists. Pashitch's parents had long been dead. Small wonder the peasant still believes in it.

Mothers in Albania and Montenegro will still tell you, when a child has died, that a curse has been put on their breasts.

M 754 681

In Montenegro, in the days when the vladikas (bishops) were said to be rulers, they had no temporal power in fact. They had no way of enforcing orders save by terrifying recalcitrants with a threat of excommunication or by putting curses on them. The vladika's curse was greatly dreaded. When Danilo Petrovitch decided to rule as temporal Prince and refused to be made bishop, I fancy he shore himself of much power. The curses of Vladika Petar I were very powerful.

He is said to have cried to an evil-doer: "May leprosy devour you!" And a year afterwards the man died of it. To another he cried: "May your stock die out!" And Medakovitch, writing of Montenegro in

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1844-54, tells the tale and says the entire bratstvo was extinct. The fishermen on the lake had to pay the vladika yearly a barrel of fish for fishing rights. No barrel arrived. They were asked why, and wickedly replied that they had not been able to catch any fish. The vladika was patient. Still no fish arrived. The fishermen then explained: "There are now no fish in the lake." "No," said the vladika firmly, "*there are none and there will be none.*"

To everyone's horror the lake was fishless. The fishermen hurried to the vladika and prayed him to withdraw his curse. He kindly did so—and the fish reappeared.

This mighty prelate was canonized by the Montenegrin Church shortly after his death, and is the revered St. Petar Cetinski.

His curses, however, pale before that laid on the Greek statesman Venizelos in 1916. I give it to show what the Orthodox Church is capable of when roused, and the present belief in the curse in the Near East. Venizelos was denounced for having "betrayed the nation to the Anglo-French." "Therefore against the traitor Venizelos we have invoked the following injuries: the ulcers of Job, the whale of Jonah, the leprosy of Naaman, the bite of Death, the shuddering of the dying, the thunderbolt of Hell, and the malediction of God and man. We shall call for the same injuries upon those who, at the forthcoming elections, shall vote for the traitor Venizelos, and further pray for their hands to withe and for them to become deaf and blind. Amen."

Curse-pits were dug, and crowds, filing by, put their curses upon stones and hurled them into the pits.

True, the ecclesiastics who laid the curse got into trouble. But they had, in fact, but expressed—flamboyantly—the feelings of the people. Venizelos, having once fallen, has never returned to power. The peasant has little faith in elections—he has every reason to doubt their efficacy; but of the efficacy of a real good curse he has ample evidence.

In Albania a curse may lie for generations on a family and end it. I visited the house of a family group at Plani in Pulati. The curse was that the family should not multiply, and I was assured it was dying out. No one knew who had laid the curse and all attempts to remove it had failed. Eighteen persons were living crowded in its one room. In cases of this kind it is obvious that unwholesome surroundings, bad water, or inherited disease is the origin of the "curse." To those so "cursed," however, the thing is a mystery, and mysterious means are the only ones used to combat it.

All medicine begins as magic. The invention of the microscope has at last revealed many of the real "demons." But even in England there are still people who prefer quack remedies to scientific "demon"-slaying ones.

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Great Russians RF2
Greece EH1
Serbs EF6

Some Balkan Taboos. Iron. Hair

The district was known to swarm with witches and, though none of them said so, similar customs in other lands make it probable that the nickname was intended to shield its owner's identity. How better than by taking a Moslem name?

A good example was my old friend, plucky old Mehmed Shpend of Shala, a well-known headman. It was incredible—nor did anyone pretend—that he had been baptized Mehmed the Raven. But when asked what his Christian name was he only grinned and twinkled, and said that "Mehmed Shpend" was "fort i bukur" ("very pretty").

A curious example of the belief that the Name is the Person occurred at Mount Athos at the beginning of this century. A Russian officer entered one of the monasteries as a monk. He was pious and much respected. Pondering over the sacred mysteries, it seemed fit to him that separate worship should be given to the Name of God. The idea found favour among some of the monks, and the cult of the name was instituted by them. The authorities at Athos forbade it, but the cult became more popular. It ended abruptly by the arrival of a Russian warship. The misguided monk was carried off and the heresy ended. The Russian Government, whether Tsarist or Bolshevist, stands no nonsense.

The Importance of a Name.—In Montenegro it was believed that the naming of a child may have an influence on its fate. It is customary for the same man to be christening "kum" (godfather) to all the children of one family. But if one child after another dies it is clear that the kum is unsuitable; and, in order to make sure this time that the kum is pleasing to God, the next infant is left in its cradle by the wayside. The mother hides close by. The first wayfarer who rashly stoops and looks at the infant is at once claimed as kum and must not refuse.

On the way up to Durmitor I saw a cradle all alone, and was about to investigate it when Krsto snatched hold of me, crying: "No! no! you will have to be kum!" He then halted and shouted out for the mother, saying that neither of us was going to be trapped into being kum. The mother came up laughing, with a sickle in her hand. She said she was merely cutting some grass and had brought the baby with her. It was already baptized; so we passed on safely. Being kum cost a deal of money and trouble. But we might have refused? "No," said Krsto decidedly; "if you are caught that is quite impossible."

Under such circumstances, and especially if the child is weakly, it is common to baptize it Zhivko (lively), or Vuk (wolf), or one of the many derivatives of Vuk—Vuksan, Vujadin, Vule, etc., or Dabizhiv (mayest thou live), in order to give strength.

The custom exists, too, in Serbia and Bosnia. In old days, in Montenegro, when the christening of children was part of the ceremony

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Montenegrins EF5

male jealousy is quite insufficient; for, in fact, the veiled Moslem woman can "carry on" incognito with far more ease than can her unveiled and recognizable Christian sister. Nor, at any rate, in the lands we are considering, is the Christian husband a whit less jealous than the Moslem. All Christian Scutari was once in a hubbub over the scandalous and shocking conduct of the Austrian doctor and Italian Consul-General. These two gentlemen had publicly exchanged wives on the Consular lawn-tennis court, and these shameless women had each played against her own husband.

I was seriously consulted and failed to convince the disgusted Scutarenes that the proceeding was harmless. How could you tell where it would end?

When I first went to Scutari, in 1901, all the Catholic married women wore a long lace veil pinned across the lower part of the face and draped over the head. Unmarried Catholic girls still, I believe, shroud their heads entirely in a thick cotton wrapper, leaving only a peep-hole.

Most of the Orthodox peasants of Macedonia, both Bulgar and Greek, wore a large handkerchief folded into a triangle over their heads and arranged the two long corners across the mouth and tucked them in securely on either side. The mouth was very often thus covered, too, by Montenegrin maidens; and by Christian women in Bosnia.

Sir James George Frazer states, giving many examples, that the covering of the mouth is connected with the belief that the soul may escape by it or evil spirits enter by it, and that complete veiling is probably a protection also from the Evil Eye.

That the mouth is the important spot is shown by the Moslem girls of Bosnia, who, when caught unveiled at a well, or on the hill-side with their flocks, will sometimes seize a handkerchief hastily between their teeth and then seem to think themselves sufficiently protected.

Now evil eyes and bad spirits swarm in the Balkans; and the soul always escapes by the nose or mouth. "My soul was in my nose all the time!" cries the Montenegrin when telling of an escape from danger.

"That brought your soul into your nose!" said the horse-boy when my horse nearly came down with me. The tying of a handkerchief over the holes through which it might escape is a very reasonable precaution.

Women who do not protect themselves with a veil, deck themselves and their children with a mass of beads and dingle-dangles. These things are to act as it were as lightning-conductors to attract the glance of the Evil Eye and save their persons from it. The veiled and hooded woman wears no ornament outside her outdoor garment.

The bride, both Catholic and Moslem, is veiled from head to foot.

[77] [596] set its internal stability. The very act of vengeance is a ritual, as is the constant repetition of [608] the need for vengeance. The rites of blood brotherhood and godfatherhood are rituals performed by Catholic and Moslem alike.

776 Both Catholics and Moslems believe in a host of malevolent spirits which pay the mountains a seasonal visit in the springtime, and which can sometimes be kept at bay by the use of amulets. These evil spirits are of course the symbols of the general hunger, illness, and irritability which beset the mountaineers at 753 this critical season. Catholics and Moslems alike attribute non-traumatic illnesses to spells cast by magicians, through the agency of hair and nail clippings. Wasting illnesses, such as consumption and cancer, may be attributed to vampires, sucking their victim's blood.

●754 A vampire is said to be a human being, usually but not always a woman, who can change herself into an insect and fly into a room in which her victim is sleeping. As she fills with the blood, she has to leave now and then to spit it out. A person who finds such a gobbet of blood on the path is lucky; he can wrap it up and keep it as an amulet to protect him against vampires—and incidentally probably expose himself and his family to tuberculosis.

When people are hungry and ill, it is easy to suspect others of evil magic. The person named as a witch or vampire will of course be someone whose actions are eccentric or mysterious, who is a cause of disturbance in the community, and whose loss will not be greatly felt. If a child is suffering from malnutrition its parents may accuse some old woman, and drag her from her house. They will accuse her of having sucked blood from the child, and force her to spit in the child's mouth. Under protest she may spit merely in order to get away. If the child recovers, then the parents are sure she is a vampire; if the child dies she was innocent for her spittle did not cure it. People do not like being accused of witchcraft, or of having their aged grandmothers hauled off for trial; such actions, like the very suspicion itself, may result in bloodshed.

782 The Ghegs are great oath-swearers. Between blood feuds rivals will swear to keep the peace, on a stone in the presence of the